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ABSTRACT

This document examines the components of a quality adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. The first section introduces indicators for teaching ESOL adult education programs, focusing on the background of a project intended to develop indicators of program quality, goals of the Task Force created to develop the indicators, core definitions, adult ESOL learners and education programs, considerations affecting the development of indicators, and purpose of the document and use of the indicators. The second section presents the eight quality indicators for adult ESOL programs: program structure, administration, and planning; curriculum; instruction; recruitment, intake, and orientation; retention and transition; assessment and learner gains; staffing, professional development, and staff evaluation; and support services. Three appendixes include sample measures and sample performance standards for selected quality indicators, student performance levels for ESL, and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System skill level descriptors for ESL. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education.) (Contains 29 references.) (SM)

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Program Standards for Adult Education ESOL Programs

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Preface

What are the components of a quality adult education ESOL program?

This document attempts, for the first time on a national level, to answer this question by describing program quality indicators in eight areas:

1. program structure, administration, and planning
2. curriculum
3. instruction
4. recruitment, intake, and orientation
5. retention and transition
6. assessment and learner gains
7. staffing, professional development, and staff evaluation
8. support services

Developed by a diverse task force consisting of adult education ESOL instructors and coordinators from all over the United States, these program quality indicators reflect the great variety of adult ESOL programs in the United States. The sample measures and performance standards also provide a variety of ways to measure continuous improvement in both small and large programs, something that is required by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998. This standards document will also be useful to adult education program directors or agencies setting up new ESOL programs or reviewing existing programs.

This is the first of what will be a two-part document. Part 2—a program self-review instrument—is being developed to accompany these standards. Part 2 will contain specific descriptive examples of the indicators in a variety of program types and a scoring guide for measuring implementation.

Finally, gratitude goes to the following people for their tireless efforts in making this publication a reality:

Holly Fadden, Maryland; Laureen Fredella, Georgia; Leann Howard, California; Susan Huss-Lederman, Wisconsin; Autumn Keltner, California; Margaret Kiernan, Virginia; Suzanne Leibman, Illinois; Diane Pecoraro, Minnesota; Joy Peyton, Washington, DC; Kathleen Santopietro Weddel, Colorado; Paula Schlusberg, New York; Carol Van Duzer, Virginia; Dan Wann, Indiana.

Joyce Campbell, U.S. Department of Education; Gail Weinstein, TESOL Board liaison; and John Segota, TESOL staff liaison.

Gretchen Bitterlin

I. Introduction: TESOL's Adult Education Program Indicators

Maria, an outreach worker at a community center, notices that many of the parents who bring their children to the center have difficulty speaking English and filling out the registration forms. She would like to develop a program to help these adults learn English. She finds a local foundation willing to fund adult literacy programs, but she has no experience obtaining funding and would like some guidance on how to apply.

Diana and DiRonne are part-time teachers in a community college adult education program that offers courses in English to speakers of other languages (ESOL). Their salaries are half the size of their part-time colleagues in the English department but their classes are twice as large. In addition, they have been told that their copying budget has been slashed and that the testing center on campus has eliminated adult education placement testing. Diana and DiRonne have been invited to join a program review committee for the college's accreditation review. They feel that these budget concerns should be addressed but are not sure how to do so.

Rueben and Sarah are ESOL specialists in their state's adult education division. The division recently sent applications for funding under the new Workforce Investment Act to administrators of programs throughout the state that serve English language learners (ELLs) at the beginning levels. Rueben and Sarah have begun receiving phone calls from these administrators requesting information on how to document their learners' performance for the first time, according to the funding requirements. Rueben and Sarah would like assistance helping these administrators identify effective means of tracking and documenting this performance.

The standards described in this document are designed to assist professionals like these, who serve in a range of capacities related to adult education ESOL programs in the United States.

Background of the Project

The Adult Education and Literacy Act of 1991 required adult basic education (ABE) programs in all states to develop indicators of program quality. The U.S. Department of Education provided examples of quality indicators for ABE programs in general, but did not provide examples specifically related to adult education ESOL programs (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1992). Therefore, in 1996, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)—the international association dedicated to developing the expertise of ESOL professionals—appointed an Adult Education Standards Task Force to review the accountability requirements in federal adult education legislation, existing program quality indicators from all states, and indicators previously written by TESOL. After the first year, the task force concluded that there needed to be a new document specifically identifying program quality indicators for adult education ESOL programs, according to the newer categories established by the U.S. Department of Education. Hence, in 1997, TESOL passed a resolution authorizing the task force to write new indicators of program quality, measures, and performance standards. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (H.R. 1385, Pub. L. No. 105-220) incorporated the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, under which ABE, including ESOL, is funded. This act not only requires states to continue the development of indicators of program quality, but also requires the development of measures of levels of performance. Thus, the work of the TESOL task force was positioned to provide examples of ways in which programs could meet the requirements of the federal legislation as well as local goals and needs.

Goals of the Task Force

Because adult education ESOL programs across the United States are so diverse, the task force concluded that it would be impossible to write specific performance standards that would apply to all programs. The task force therefore revised its mission and decided to write indicators of program quality, providing only sample measures and sample performance standards to serve as examples of what states could include in their own standards documents. The following document attempts to identify key criteria for a quality adult education ESOL program—the quality indicators—and the means by which to measure successful implementation of these criteria. The goal of the task force, and the intent of these quality indicators, is to provide a descriptive framework for examining any adult education ESOL program. The indicators are not meant to be prescriptive and should not be taken as such. Rather, they should provide individuals and communities with a starting point from which to begin adapting and implementing programs to fit local goals and needs.

Core Definitions

Several frequently used terms require definition to clarify how they are used in this document.

Program Quality Indicators and Measures

Indicators are variables that reflect effective and efficient performance, taking into account the variety in adult education ESOL programs.

Measures are tools to determine the extent to which an indicator is present or achieved. Measures are distinct from *performance standards,* or *levels of performance,* which define a level of acceptable performance in terms of a specific numeric criterion, and from *content standards,* which specify the content of instruction.

Adult Education ESOL Programs

Adult education ESOL programs are programs in the United States that serve adults whose first language (L1) is not English. The primary objective of these programs is to enable adult learners who are not fully fluent and literate in English to become competent in communicating in English. That includes acquiring listening and speaking skills and the ability to read and write in English. These programs are designed to help these adults learn these skills so that they can meet their personal, vocational, academic, community, and employment goals. The great diversity of adult ESOL learners and programs is discussed in a later section (see pp. 10–13).

Literacy and ESOL Literacy

In general, the term *literacy,* as used in this document, is defined in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998 (H.R. 1385, 1998) as "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society" (n.p.). In this definition, the phrase "in English" is key to the instruction of adult ELLs. Even though adults may be literate—even highly educated—in their native language, they would still be included in the scope of this definition because they still need to acquire English language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that are traditionally thought of as literacy skills.

Given this definition, virtually any adult education ESOL program could be called an ESOL literacy program, but within adult ESOL programs, the term *ESOL literacy* refers to instruction specifically for ELLs who may not be fully literate in their native language—that is, they have limited or no reading and writing skills in their native language. In such

cases, ESOL literacy learners "may have acquired some conversational skills in English," but they have not necessarily acquired the reading and writing skills necessary "for access to training, job mobility, or success in regular ESL classes" (Wrigley, 1993, p. 1).

Differences Between Adult Education ESOL and Adult Basic Education

In trying to identify what adult education ESOL is, it is helpful to contrast it with adult basic education (ABE), highlighting the differences. Although for funding purposes, adult education ESOL is a category of ABE, adult ELLs are very different from those in ABE. The focus for the majority of ABE students is acquisition of basic skills in reading, writing, and math, whereas for many adult ELLs who have already mastered those basic skills in their native language, the focus is on the acquisition of a new language, including listening and speaking skills. Of course, there are still many adult ELLs in the United States who do not have a high school diploma (Fitzgerald, July 1995). These learners need to improve their basic skills as do native speakers of English (NSs), but they need to be taught in a different way and with different materials than would be appropriate for teaching NSs. ABE students use their mother tongue, English, to improve basic skills, gain knowledge, handle learning tasks, and communicate easily with the instructor. The adult ELL, in contrast, struggles constantly to cope with both oral and written directions, understand conversations laced with idiomatic language, and master not just the language of educational materials but also the culture on which they are based.

Adult ESOL Learners and Programs

Adult ELLs are a broadly diverse group, representing a wide range of linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds as well as ages and motivations for learning. The term *adult education ESOL program* similarly encompasses a great diversity of providers, types of programs, and program characteristics. To understand the quality indicators presented in this document, one must understand and take into account this great variety (see, e.g., National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education [hereafter referred to as NCLE], 1998).

Characteristics of Adult ELLs

The target population of adult ELLs for whom these indicators have been written is very diverse but generally has the following characteristics:

- Adult ELLs are at least 16 years old or more. A national study of new participants in federally funded adult education ESOL programs found that 61% were under 31 years of

age (NCLE, 1999). In any one class, however, ages may range from 16 to 95. Adult ESOL learners mainly include permanent residents of the United States, immigrants, refugees, and migrant workers (DAEL, n.d.) coming from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Although certain nationalities and language backgrounds may dominate in specific localities, wide diversity is very common. Any one ESOL classroom may have as many as 15 different language backgrounds represented.

- Adult ELLs have a variety of educational backgrounds and literacy levels, from no education at all to a PhD degree. Again, looking at new participants in federally funded programs, half had at least a high school education, whereas 32% had fewer than 9 years of education, and of those, 9% had fewer than 5 years of schooling (Fitzgerald, 1995; NCLE, 1999). Another study, focusing specifically on participants in adult ESOL literacy programs, found that most of these ESOL literacy learners had only a few years of schooling, whether they came from literate societies, such as Mexico and El Salvador, or from preliterate societies, as in the case of the Hmong (Wrigley, 1993). Whatever their educational backgrounds, all adult ELLs bring to the classroom a great deal of experience and background knowledge from which to draw in their learning.

- Adult ELLs are generally highly motivated and voluntarily enroll in ESOL classes. They attend ESOL classes for a variety of reasons, most predominantly, as cited in numerous studies (see, e.g., Kim, Collins, & McArthur, 1997; Valentine, 1990), because they desire to

  > learn English to communicate better in their everyday lives
  > get a job or improve their job status
  > become a citizen of the United States
  > get a high school diploma or GED (General Educational Development) Certificate
  > acquire skills needed to advance to higher education programs (e.g., vocational training, college, university)
  > acquire skills to help their children succeed in school

  Some adults also attend in order to fulfill specially funded program requirements as a result of legislation, such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

- The overriding common goal of all adult ESOL learners is to make immediate use of their classroom learning to communicate with English speakers; learn about the culture and customs of the United States; and function effectively as individuals, family members, workers, community participants, and lifelong learners in the United States.

Providers and Types of Adult Education ESOL Programs

Providers of adult education ESOL programs are many and varied:

- K–12 public school districts: Many offer adult ESOL instruction. In some public school programs, students use the facilities of the K–12 divisions; in others, a dedicated facility under the auspices of the public school system is provided.

- Community colleges: Many also offer adult education ESOL programs. Most community colleges do not charge tuition for these classes, although there may be fees for all or some classes.

- Community-based organizations (CBOs): CBOs, including volunteer-based programs, provide adult ESOL instruction in many areas of the country and may act as the sole provider or may provide ancillary services to other programs. CBOs include literacy councils, religious-based organizations, ethnic organizations such as mutual assistance agencies (MAAs), and refugee service centers.

- Correctional institutions: Increasing numbers of correctional institutions provide adult education ESOL programs, giving students an opportunity to develop language, life, and employment skills while serving their sentences.

- Libraries: In many areas, libraries are centers of adult ESOL instruction, providing central locations, generally in close proximity to public transportation. A library may be the sponsor/provider of adult education ESOL programs or may be the site for another provider's program. For example, many volunteer programs are library based, but not all library programs are volunteer operated.

- Workplaces: Adult education ESOL programs of several types are offered in many work places. These programs may be sponsored by a company, union, a partnership of the two, or in collaboration with an educational institution. Services may be provided by the company, a union, or an educational institution with which the company contracts.

There are also many types of adult education ESOL programs:

- General English language development: The majority of programs are those that deal with general English language development, focusing on reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in all classes. These programs also assist students in developing skills needed to survive in and adjust to many aspects of life in the United States, from shopping to preparing for a job to accessing health care.

- Family ESOL literacy: In family ESOL literacy programs, the family is the learning unit; instructional approaches center on families learning and using the new language together. These programs may focus particularly on meeting the goals of parents learning English in order to read to their children or help their children succeed in school in the United

States. They aim to create a desire for lifelong learning and exemplify the idea that families provide an intergenerational transfer of languages, traditions, and cultural values to their children. Components in family literacy include "interactive literacy activities between parents and their children, training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children, and parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency" (National Center for Family Literacy, 1999, p. 3).

- Citizenship: Citizenship preparation classes are an integral part of many programs because some students are seeking naturalization. Classes may offer English as part of the preparation for full civic participation and empowerment, or they may focus solely on information necessary to fulfill the naturalization requirements.

- Vocational ESOL: Vocational ESOL (also referred to as VESOL or VESL) programs are designed to prepare students for job training classes or employment in specific occupational areas. VESOL classes use job-related language and tasks as the vehicle for teaching English.

- English for specific purposes: English for specific purposes (ESP) focuses on the development of vocabulary and communication skills for a specific area or field, such as English for business or English for the medical field.

- Workforce or workplace ESOL: Workforce or workplace ESOL literacy programs focus on language and communication skills needed for success in the workplace. This type of program combines English language and literacy instruction with employment skills training. Workplace ESOL classes are commonly supported by an employer and offered at a work site; they generally present a curriculum customized to fit the needs of the workers and the employer. The focus may be the skills needed for a particular job or workplace or more general skills.

- Content-based ESOL: Content-based ESOL concentrates on the subject matter that is being taught. The focus is on content, in which development of language skills is embedded within the content instruction. Examples of content-based instruction include math for ESOL learners or how to buy a home in the United States.

- Preacademic ESOL: Preacademic ESOL instruction concentrates on preparing learners for further education and training in postsecondary institutions, vocational education classes, or ABE and GED classes.

Characteristics of Adult Education ESOL Programs

Programs serving adult ESOL learners are as varied as the learners themselves. As the discussion of program types and providers (see p. 12) indicates, "diversity is the hallmark of ESL literacy programs" (Wrigley, 1993, p. 2). Adult education ESOL programs use a variety of settings. Most common is the traditional classroom, but that classroom may be

located at a work site, union hall, prison, or housing project, as well as in a school or community college. Literacy organizations and volunteer groups often provide one-to-one tutoring or instruction in very small groups. Learning labs, with computers, self-paced learning materials, and self-contained study packets, are options being used in some areas to enhance learning. Distance learning in various modes, from video- to Web-based models, is also being developed to provide greater flexibility for the large number of adult ESOL learners needing educational services and, in some cases, to provide access to instruction when classrooms are limited.

Most adult education ESOL programs offer a variety of scheduling options and arrangements, a flexibility designed to maximize learning opportunities and take into account the varied demands on learners' lives. Many programs offer open-entry/open-exit policies. Along with many day programs, evening programs are very common. The length of programs also varies, depending on factors ranging from funding requirements to the independently determined calendar of a host institution to the needs and desires of the target group of learners. There is an increasing demand from a variety of sources, such as employers or human service agencies, for short-term and content-specific courses to meet specific performance outcomes.

The level of resources—physical and financial—available for adult education ESOL programs also varies greatly. Funding comes from a wide range of public and private sources. Public money primarily comes through state and local agencies. Programs may also receive federal funds under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Program funding may also come from corporations, foundations, and, for some types of programs, private donations. Funding is often short term, and program personnel must constantly reapply and search for new sources of funds. Some programs serve populations that qualify for different funding streams, and administrators must juggle distinct requirements for use of funds as well as for reporting. Funding has a clear impact on a program's ability to provide facilities conducive to learning and quality instruction. Many programs are housed in facilities unsuitable for fostering learning; some even take place in temporary or makeshift facilities. A common challenge is teaching multilevel classes, usually with large numbers of learners and severely limited supplies. There are, of course, many other programs that are well funded, operating in facilities that support learning, with up-to-date equipment, such as computers or other technology, and all necessary supplies. These well-funded facilities can and should serve as models for what is required for a quality adult education ESOL program.

Considerations Affecting the Development of Indicators

The quality indicators in this document represent underlying principles of adult learning and second language acquisition (SLA) and the many factors affecting the acquisition of English by adult learners.

Adult Learning and SLA

A quality ESOL program for adults is very different from an ESOL program for children or a program teaching English to NSs. The following considerations from research in SLA and adult learning theory underlie many of the program quality indicators.

Research in SLA tells us that adults and children differ to some degree in aspects of second language (L2) development. For example, the speed at which children and adults learn an L2 differs, with adolescents learning the quickest, followed by adults, and then children. Perhaps adult learners have more opportunities to negotiate meaning in the target language or have better developed cognitive abilities (Ellis, 1994). Children, on the other hand, normally acquire nativelike pronunciation of an L2, whereas adults generally do not, although to date there is no conclusive explanation for why this is the case (see Nunan, 1999, for a summary of related research).

Although little SLA research has been conducted on the relationship between literacy in the L1 and acquisition of an L2, research in learning strategies and L2 learning does indicate that, among children and teenagers, transfer of academic literacy skills learned through one language to academic contexts in an L2 is not automatic (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Imagine, then, the considerable challenges facing adult ESOL learners who have received little to no schooling in their native language or who come from a preliterate society.

For adult ELLs, as for all L2 learners, learning is facilitated when instruction integrates the language skills (e.g., speaking, listening, reading, writing) when appropriate, providing a textured, rich experience in which skills reinforce each other in the learning process (Brown, 1994). Research indicates that adults learn best when learning is contextualized, emphasizing communication of meaning and use of English in real situations. Furthermore, by drawing on learners' background knowledge and thus ratifying the value of experiences that adult learners bring into the classroom, adult education ESOL programs can make instruction more relevant to the learners, who have limited time to devote to formal learning.

Factors Affecting the Acquisition of English for Adult ESOL Learners

One of the most commonly asked questions of professionals in the field of adult education ESOL is how long it takes students to learn English. This question comes not only from the learners themselves but from sponsors, employers, school officials, and friends and family members as well. Although there is no single or absolute answer, research and experience indicate that learning an L2 takes a considerable period of time: "It is generally accepted that it takes from 5-7 years to go from not knowing any English at all to being able to accomplish most communication tasks including academic tasks" (NCLE, 1999, n.p.). The Mainstream English Language Project (MELT), conducted in the 1980s, identified 10

student performance levels (SPLs) on a scale of no proficiency to fluency equal to that of a NS. Field testing for that project at various programs in the United States indicated that a range of anywhere from 120–235 hours of study may be needed for an individual learner to move up one SPL (Grognet, 1997). Most adults do not have that kind of time to devote to learning the language, yet they need to acquire a functional use of English as soon as possible. Opportunities to use English outside the classroom constitute one factor that can speed the time it takes for the adult ESOL learner to attain functional skills and even fluency.

The wide range of time estimates for developing English language skills reflects the variety of factors that affect the rate at which an adult will learn English in the United States. These factors include the program characteristics described earlier (see pp. 13–14) and, in particular, the great variety of learner characteristics.

The age of the learner plays a significant role in speed of English language learning. Younger adults often tend to learn English more quickly than older adults. With the wide mix of ages in many classes, the difference in ability to acquire new language skills may be particularly apparent and create additional instructional challenges.

Language background may also affect learning. Learners whose language does not use the Roman alphabet may need more time than those whose language shares an alphabet and vocabulary base with English.

Level of prior education plays a significant role in speed of language acquisition. Learners with higher levels of education commonly progress more quickly than those with more limited education.

The degree of L1 literacy is another important factor affecting acquisition of English, particularly reading and writing skills. Adult ELLs who have limited or no literacy skills in their native language face additional learning challenges as they grapple with initial literacy development along with a new language.

Cultural background also comes into play. For example, some adult ELLs are not accustomed to being taught by a member of the opposite sex and need time to adjust to this situation. Others come from highly formal, teacher-centered classrooms and find the informality of the U.S. classroom and the active participation of students troublesome to the point of interfering with learning.

The culture shock experienced by adult ESOL learners and the varied circumstances that brought such learners to the United States and to the class may affect learning as well. Often, the learners' emotional turmoil about, or even resistance to, being in the United States can block their language acquisition. Other emotional or psychological factors may also interfere. ELLs may be dealing with loneliness, disorienting shifts in family structure, domestic violence, or posttraumatic stress disorder.

For some adult ELLs, learning and access to an educational program is affected by a condition, such as a learning disability, visual or auditory impairment, or other physical impairment, requiring adaptation of equipment, environment, or manner of instruction. These special needs may be more difficult to discern in adult ELLs, and these learners may be less aware of their rights to accommodations under the law than persons who speak English or those who have lived in the United States longer. Ideally, to enhance access and educational opportunities for these special needs learners, program designs should include recruiting materials and methods for serving visually or hearing impaired persons, registration and placement processes that accommodate all kinds of learners, and personnel at all levels who are aware of the special needs of these learners and can adapt instruction to suit those needs.

Motivational factors—the reasons for which learners come to an ESOL program—can also affect acquisition of English. Externally imposed requirements, such as recent abrupt changes in welfare legislation, are likely to create emotional turmoil that can interfere with learning. Personal goals, such as the desire to help one's children with schoolwork or improve one's job performance, can stimulate acquisition when the learning is clearly directed toward achieving those goals.

The personal situation of adult learners and the many demands on their lives affect attendance in class and the amount of time they have to devote to learning English. Many issues can interfere with a student's ability to focus on learning:

- work demands, including long hours, split shifts, and changing schedules
- family responsibilities, including child and elder care
- overall health and well-being of the learner
- access to an adult education ESOL program, including availability of transportation

In short, because of their varied backgrounds and experiences, adult ELLs learn in a variety of ways and progress at different rates. This means that there is no single method of language instruction that is appropriate for all adult ELLs and there are no exact time lines identifying how long it may take an adult learner to acquire fluency in English.

Purpose of the Document and the Use of Indicators

The indicators of program quality presented in the next section (see p. 19) are not intended to create prescriptive or rigid requirements for all adult education ESOL programs. They were written with model programs in mind. Due to the extent of variation in programs and learners, as described above, implementation or use of the indicators must take into account issues such as program size, autonomy, funding requirements and restrictions, learner goals and characteristics, program resources, staffing, and many other factors. The impact of this

variation means that, in some cases, a particular indicator or indicators cannot, and should not, be applied to a particular program.

For selected indicators, sample measures and sample levels of performance have been provided. These are intended to suggest possible formats as well as the kinds of issues that can, and should, be measured, and the levels of performance that can, and should, be set. Benchmarks will need to be set based on local conditions and criteria and should be based on multiple measures.

There are many ways in which these indicators can be used. For instance, Maria, the outreach worker at the community center who wants to set up an ESOL program for parents, can identify the important components of an ESOL program by using the indicators, particularly those dealing with curriculum, instruction, and staff qualifications. She can also refer to the indicators in justifying the level of funding she requests.

Diana and DiRonne, the part-time teachers who serve on a program review committee at their community college, can use the indicators as criteria for analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of their program. The indicators supporting equitable compensation, placement testing, and appropriate class size are a few examples of criteria they can use to develop an ESOL program review self-study instrument for accreditation purposes.

Rueben and Sarah, working in their state's department of education, can use the indicators on learner gains and the sample measures and levels of performance as guidelines and models to advise the administrators or program directors who need to write local performance measures as required by their state plan.

Maria, Diane, DiRonne, Rueben, and Sarah represent the thousands of people in the field of adult education ESOL whose main goal is to provide quality ESOL instruction for adult learners. We hope this document serves as a useful tool in that endeavor.

II. Quality Indicators for Adult Education ESOL Programs

1. Program Structure, Administration, and Planning

Program Structure

A. The program has a mission statement, a clearly articulated philosophy, and goals developed with input from internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders may include administrators, instructional staff, support staff, program volunteers, and learners. External stakeholders may include boards or advisory groups; community and agency leaders; business leaders; employment and training agencies; other educational or service providers; state, federal, and local legislators; and funders.

B. The program has a system of governance (e.g., a board of directors or advisory group and bylaws) that ensures accountability and effective administration of all program activities. The system of governance will vary according to whether the program is autonomous or affiliated with a larger institution or organization.

C. The program has an administrative structure with administrative personnel who have experience or awareness of the specific needs of adult ESOL learners in their communities.

D. The program organizes its instructional offerings to be consistent with the program's mission and goals and with the goals and needs of learners in the community being served.

E. The program has a curriculum, including learning goals, materials, and resources, for each type of instructional offering.

F. The program has an accountability plan with a system for record keeping and reporting that is consistent with program policies and legal and funding requirements.

G. The program has a comprehensive assessment and evaluation policy and procedures that link assessment to instruction as well as learner goals and needs.

Administration

H. The program fosters and maintains linkages and clear communication with internal and external stakeholders. Linkages vary according to the constraints of program guidelines, size, resources, and autonomy.

I. The program uses facilities and resources appropriate for adult learners. If a program is part of a larger institution, facilities meet standards equivalent to those of other programs.

J. The program provides trained support personnel and equipment for day-to-day operations and for efficient record keeping.

K. The program maintains a student-teacher ratio conducive to meeting learning needs and goals within the constraints of program guidelines.

L. The program provides courses of sufficient intensity and duration with flexible schedules to meet varied learner and community needs in convenient locations within the constraints of program resources.

M. The program has a procedure for ensuring confidentiality in communication with internal and external stakeholders.

N. The program supports employment conditions, compensation, and benefits commensurate with those of other instructional or professional staff with comparable qualifications (e.g., the program employs full-time instructional staff and provides part-time instructors with prorated benefits).

O. The program provides the instructional staff with access to materials, resources, and services (e.g., books, scissors, workbooks, duplication services, computers) to support classroom instruction.

P. The program has sound financial management procedures to collect and maintain fiscal information, guide program budgeting, ensure continuity of funding, and meet reporting requirements.

Q. The program demonstrates respect for the cultures of learners, staff, and other stakeholders.

Planning

R. The program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation, and based on a written plan that considers targeted community demographics; retention patterns; needs; resources; and economic, educational, and technological trends.

S. The program has a technology plan. The plan addresses the use, acquisition, and maintenance of technological resources and training of personnel. It is aligned with program goals and learner needs.

T. The program has a plan for outreach, marketing, and public relations activities to foster awareness and understanding of the program.

2. Curriculum

A. The program has a process for developing curriculum that includes participation and input from learners, instructors, program administrators, experts on topics such as special needs learning and cross-cultural communication, and other stakeholders in the community.

B. The curriculum reflects the mission and philosophy of the program and is compatible with principles of SLA for adult learners.

C. The curriculum includes goals, objectives, outcomes, approaches, methods, activities, materials, technological resources, and evaluation measures that are appropriate for meeting learners' needs and goals, as identified by needs assessment activities. The curriculum reflects learners' goals while considering their roles as individuals, family members, community participants, workers, and lifelong learners.

D. The curriculum specifies learning objectives for each instructional offering for learners, stated in terms of progress within the class or program and measurable performance outcomes. Where necessary, the curriculum is appropriate for learners in multilevel classes.

E. Curriculum and instructional materials are easily accessible, up to date, appropriate for adult learners, culturally sensitive, and oriented to the language and literacy needs of the learners.

F. Curriculum materials and suggested activities address a variety of learning styles and strategies and incorporate learners' different experiences, prior knowledge, and special learning needs.

G. The program has an ongoing process for curriculum revision in response to the changing needs of the learners, community, and policies.

3. Instruction

A. Instructional activities adhere to principles of adult learning and language acquisition. These principles include the following:

- Adult learners bring a variety of experiences, skills, and knowledge to the classroom that need to be acknowledged and included in lessons.
- Language acquisition is facilitated through providing a nonthreatening environment in which learners feel comfortable and self-confident and are encouraged to take risks to use the target language.
- Adult learners progress more rapidly when the content is relevant to their lives. Language learning is cyclical, not linear, so learning objectives need to be recycled in a variety of contexts.

B. Instructional approaches are varied to meet the needs of adult learners with diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. Examples of these approaches include, but are not limited to, the following:

- grammar-based (focus on the basic structure of language, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation)
- competency-based or functional context (focus on application of specific basic language skills in areas needed to function in everyday life or at work)
- whole language (integrated approach using listening, speaking, reading, and writing in thematic contexts often introduced through learner-generated content)
- participatory (focus on developing language and literacy skills to facilitate personal empowerment, community involvement, and social change)
- content-based (focus on developing language to support learner success in specific content areas, such as citizenship or vocational training)

C. Instructional activities engage learners in taking an active role in the learning process.

D. Instructional activities focus on the acquisition of communication skills necessary for students to function as individuals, family members, community participants, workers, and lifelong learners. Content is determined by what students need or want to accomplish with the language outside the classroom or in other educational programs (e.g., ABE, GED

preparation, postsecondary education, and vocational training programs).

E. Instructional activities integrate the four language skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), focusing on receptive and productive skills appropriate to learners' needs.

F. Instructional activities are varied to address the different learning styles (e.g., aural, oral, visual, kinesthetic) of the learners.

G. Instructional activities incorporate grouping strategies and interactive tasks that facilitate the development of authentic communication skills. Techniques that facilitate these tasks include cooperative learning, information gap, role-play, simulations, problem solving, and problem posing.

H. Instructional activities take into account the needs of multilevel groups of learners, particularly those with minimal literacy skills in their native language and English.

I. Instructional activities focus on the development of language and culturally appropriate behaviors needed for critical thinking, problem solving, team participation, and study skills.

J. Instructional activities offer students opportunities to use authentic resources (e.g., newspapers, telephone books, school notices, library resources, community agencies, work sites, television, and the Internet), both inside and outside the classroom.

K. Instructional activities give learners the opportunity to develop an awareness of and competency in the use of appropriate technologies to meet lesson objectives. Examples of these technologies include telephones, computers, fax machines, and audio and video equipment.

L. Instructional activities are culturally sensitive to the learners and integrate language and culture.

M. Instructional activities prepare students for formal and informal assessment situations, such as test taking, job interviews, and keeping personal learning records.

4. Recruitment, Intake, and Orientation

A. A quality ESOL program has effective procedures for identifying and recruiting adult ESOL learners. The procedures include strategies for collecting data on community demographics that identify the populations that need to be served, particularly those at the lowest level of literacy.

B. The program uses a variety of recruitment strategies (e.g., personal contacts, peer student referrals, print and broadcast media, outreach to community groups, networking with various institutions, advertising through and participation in community events, and use of technological sources, such as Web sites and electronic discussion lists).

C. The program takes steps to ensure that culturally and linguistically appropriate recruitment and program information materials and activities reach the targeted populations in multiple languages as needed. Recruitment materials suitable for persons with special needs should be available (e.g., larger print, audiotapes).

D. The program evaluates the effectiveness of its recruitment efforts and makes changes as needed.

E. The program has an intake process that provides appropriate assessment of the learner's needs, goals, and language proficiency level; an orientation process that provides the learner with information about the program; and, if needed, referral to support services within the program or through other agencies.

F. The adult education ESOL program has a procedure for accommodating learners waiting to enter the program.

5. Retention and Transition

A. The program supports retention through enrollment and attendance procedures that reflect program goals, requirements of program funders, and demands on the adult learner (e.g., flexible enrollment options, flexible transfer, and short-term courses).

B. The program encourages learners to participate consistently and long enough to reach their identified goals. This may be accomplished by adjusting the scheduling and location of classes and by providing appropriate support services.

C. The program addresses retention issues by accommodating the special needs of learners as fully as possible (e.g., case management, counseling, native language support, and learning accommodations).

D. The program improves retention by contacting learners with irregular attendance patterns and acknowledging learners who attend regularly.

E. The program improves retention by providing learners with appropriate support for transition to other programs (e.g., ABE, GED preparation, job training or postsecondary education) or to the workplace.

6. Assessment and Learner Gains

Assessment Policy

A. A quality ESOL program has a comprehensive assessment policy that reflects the mission and goals of the program, legal requirements, and needs of the learners and other stakeholders, and is linked to instructional objectives and activities. Procedures are developed with input from internal and external stakeholders.

B. The assessment policy is based on principles of adult learning, SLA, language learning pedagogy, and literacy development for adults.

C. The program has a process for assessing students' skills and goals for placement into the program, documentation of progress within the program, and exit from the program. This includes appropriate assessment of learners with special learning needs.

D. Assessment activities are ongoing and appropriately scheduled, providing information about educational gains, student outcomes, and recommendations for further assessment (e.g., special needs, literacy considerations).

E. The program has procedures for collecting and reporting data on educational gains and outcomes. Data are reported in clear and precise language to all stakeholders without violating standards of confidentiality.

F. The program provides appropriate facilities, equipment, and conditions for assessment activities (e.g., appropriate space for intake and initial assessment, sufficient audiovisual equipment).

Types of Assessment

G. The program identifies learners' needs and goals as individuals, family members, community participants, workers, and lifelong learners.

H. The program assesses the language proficiency level of learners in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The assessments may also identify the learners' literacy skills in their primary language and any learning disabilities.

I. The program uses a variety of appropriate assessments, including authentic, performance-based assessments; standardized tests; learner self-assessment; and assessment of nonlinguistic outcomes (e.g., perceived improvement in self-esteem, participation in teamwork activities).

J. If standardized assessment instruments are used, those instruments are reliable and valid, based on studies with the targeted adult-level population.

Uses of Assessment

K. The information obtained through needs assessment is used to aid administrators, instructors, and tutors in developing curricula, materials, skills assessments, and teaching approaches that are relevant to learners' lives.

L. Assessment results are clearly explained and shared with learners, to the extent permitted by assessment guidelines, in order to help learners progress.

M. Assessment activities document learners' progress within the ESOL program toward advancement to other training programs, employment, postsecondary education, and attainment of other learner goals.

Learner Gains

N. Learners identify their short-term and long-term goals.

O. Learners demonstrate skill-level improvements in listening, speaking, reading, and writing through a variety of assessments.

P. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of their short- and long-term goals.

Q. Learners demonstrate progress in nonlinguistic areas identified as important toward meeting their goals.

R. Learners attain their personal goals, short- or long-term, within time frames compatible with learner and program expectations.

7. Staffing, Professional Development, and Staff Evaluation

Staff Qualifications

A. The program recruits and hires qualified instructional staff with training in the theory and methodology of teaching ESOL. Qualifications may vary according to local agency requirements and type of instructional position (e.g., paid instructor, volunteer tutor). Examples of qualifications include a bachelor's or master's degree in TESOL, TESOL certificate from an accredited institution, adult education credential with authorization to teach ESOL, a certificate of completion from a provider's preservice TESOL training program, or a combination of adult-level ESOL teaching experience and training determined to be equivalent.

B. The program recruits and hires qualified administrative, instructional, and support staff who have appropriate training in cross-cultural communication and reflect the cultural diversity of learners.

C. The program provides all paid and volunteer instructional staff with written job descriptions and personnel information that includes access to a grievance procedure.

D. The program has a process for orienting new ESOL administrative, instructional, and support staff to the ESOL program.

Professional Development

E. The program has a professional development plan, developed with input from staff and stakeholders. The program allocates appropriate resources to implement the plan, including compensation for staff participation.

F. The program provides opportunities for its instructional staff to expand their knowledge of current trends, best practices, use of technology, and research in the field of SLA and adult literacy and through paid participation in national, state, and local conferences, workshops, seminars, and access to state resource centers.

G. The program provides opportunities for administrators and project evaluators to become knowledgeable about effective teaching strategies in adult ESOL and current trends in the field of adult ESOL.

H. Professional development activities are varied, based on needs of the staff, and provide opportunities for practice and consistent follow up. Examples of activities include work-

shops, TESOL and affiliate conventions, intensive training sessions, credit for graduate coursework, mentoring, peer coaching, distance learning activities, and action research.

I. Professional development activities are responsive to developments in the field of ESOL and adult learning research and external influences, such as legislation, that affects ESOL instruction.

J. The program maintains an up-to-date resource library of materials on teaching methods and previous course syllabi and provides access to these resources.

K. The program provides training in assessment procedures and in the interpretation and use of assessment results.

L. The program encourages faculty and staff to join professional ESOL and adult education organizations and supports staff participation in professional development activities of the organizations.

M. The program supports collaboration among adult ESOL instructors, instructional personnel in other content areas, K–12 English and ESOL instructors, support service providers, workplace personnel, and representatives of programs to which students transition.

N. The program has a process for recognizing the participation of staff in professional development activities and for supporting further professional development.

Staff Evaluation

O. The program has a process for the regular evaluation of administrator, instructor, and support staff performance that is consistent with the program's philosophy. The process is developed with input from staff.

P. The program provides learners with the opportunity to evaluate program staff anonymously. The tools are user friendly and allow for variety in learner proficiency levels, backgrounds, cultural diversity, and special needs.

Q. The program provides opportunities for all staff members to develop performance improvement plans.

8. Support Services

A. The program provides access to a variety of services directly or through referrals to cooperating agencies. Examples of services include childcare, transportation, health, employment counseling, educational counseling, legal advice, personal and family counseling, assessment of learning disabilities, native language translators and interpreters, and services related to other barriers to learning.

B. The program provides a process for identifying learning disabilities in L2 learners and incorporates appropriate accommodations and training of staff, either directly through the program or indirectly through referrals to cooperating agencies.

C. The program develops linkages with cooperating agencies to ensure that referrals to support services result in meeting learners' needs, including those of learners with disabilities.

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Sample Measures and Sample Performance Standards for Selected Quality Indicators for Adult Education ESOL Programs

Note: The following are meant to serve as examples of how performance standards might be written for adult education ESOL programs; therefore, specific performance levels are not defined.

QUALITY INDICATOR	MEASURE(S)	PERFORMANCE STANDARD(S)
1. Program Structure		
N. The program supports employment conditions, compensation, and benefits commensurate with those of other instructional or professional staff with comparable qualifications (e.g., the program employs full-time instructional staff and provides part-time instructors with prorated benefits).	Employee contracts, salary schedules, personnel records, assigned faculty teaching hours, or human resource data reflect employment conditions, compensation, and benefits commensurate with those of other instructional or professional staff with comparable qualifications.	___% of TESOL instructional staff in programs with a sufficient number of ELLs have full-time positions. ___% of TESOL instructional staff have insurance benefits, paid holidays, and leave. ___% of TESOL instructional staff have employment contracts. Compensation for ESOL program staff is commensurate with those of other instructional or professional staff with comparable qualifications. Description of each ESOL instructor's course load and work load provides evidence that it is comparable to that of other instructional or professional staff.
2. Curriculum		
D. The curriculum specifies learning objectives for each instructional offering for learners, stated in terms of progress within the class or program and measurable performance outcomes. Where necessary, the curriculum is suitable for learners in multilevel classes.	Learning objectives are listed in an easily accessible, program-specified arrangement (e.g., competency listings by level and cross-listings by topic, record of emergence of objectives developed through participatory needs assessment) within the program's curriculum document. Options and strategies for managing learning objectives within a multilevel class are specified within a program's curriculum document.	For each instructional offering, sample individual student records document objectives achieved during course work or a record of achievements developed through a participatory process. Program curricular records show course objectives for each course offering. Sample lesson plans for multilevel classes, including needs assessment strategies, student grouping strategies, and means of assessment in the multilevel classroom, appear within the curriculum document. A cross-listing of objectives at different levels within a common topic area appears in the curriculum document.

QUALITY INDICATOR	MEASURE(S)	PERFORMANCE STANDARD(S)
2. Curriculum (continued)		
E. Curriculum and instructional materials are easily accessible, up to date, appropriate for adult learners, culturally sensitive, and oriented to the language and literacy needs of the learners.	The program has in place a regular process for updating curriculum based on learner needs or target population needs.	The program documents program assessment measures, including classroom-based needs assessments, target population surveys, and census data. The program documents the implementation of curriculum change based on learner or target population needs.
	The program has a process in place for maintaining appropriate instructional materials.	The program houses or provides easy access to a materials library for teachers. The program references current instructional materials in curricular documents. The program pilot tests new materials on representative student groups. The program staff/textbook committee periodically obtains and pilots the use of review copies of new materials that are consistent with curricular objectives and the needs of the learners, making recommendations for the adoption of texts on a regular basis (e.g., annually). ___% of the faculty indicate that they have access to current and appropriate materials.
3. Instruction		
G. Instructional activities incorporate grouping strategies and interactive tasks that facilitate the development of authentic communication skills. Techniques that facilitate these tasks include cooperative learning, information gap, role play, simulations, problem solving, and problem posing.	Interactive tasks or a variety of grouping strategies are evidenced by classroom observation, teacher logs, written lesson plans, student journals, and directions related to the use of classroom materials.	During classroom observations, the majority of the students are actively engaged in a task that cannot be completed without appropriate communication. A teacher's log or lesson plans show evidence of communicative pair work or small-group work for ___% of class time each day.
4. Recruitment, Intake, and Orientation		
E. The program has an intake process that provides appropriate assessment of the learner's needs, goals, and language proficiency level; an orientation process that provides the learner with information about the program; and, if needed, referral to support services within the program or through other agencies.	The presence of an intake process is evidenced by completed needs assessment forms, registration forms, cumulative reports on placement activities, and language assessment results for students entering a program. Language assessment instruments for placement assess listening and speaking skills as well as reading and writing skills.	___% of all students entering the program have completed needs assessment forms identifying learner needs and goals. ___% of all students are placed into classes according to placement assessment results (e.g., scores on an oral interview test

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QUALITY INDICATOR	MEASURE(S)	PERFORMANCE STANDARD(S)
4. Recruitment, Intake, and Orientation (continued)		and a short written test). Scores are correlated with program language proficiency levels. ___% of the students report that they received information about the program within ___ weeks of entry or enrollment. A monthly placement report documents that ___% of students placed into classes received an orientation to the program.
	Students are oriented to the program through any of the following procedures: • Students receive written information about the program in their native language. • Students view a short videotape in their native language or English. • Students attend a short orientation session. • Students receive information about the program from their teacher during class time.	
5. Retention and Transition		
A. The program supports retention through enrollment and attendance procedures that reflect program goals, requirements of program funders, and demands on the adult learner (e.g., flexible enrollment options, flexible transfer, and short-term courses).	The program has a written attendance policy. The program offers short- and long-term classes. The program offers classes at a variety of times and locations. The program has an enrollment procedure that places the learner as quickly as possible.	The average length of learner time in the program increases by ___% because of a change in attendance or enrollment procedures. ___% of the learners are placed immediately into the program or class of their choice without having to be put on a waiting list.
E. The program improves retention by providing learners with appropriate support for transition to other programs (e.g., ABE, GED preparation, job training or postsecondary education) or to the workplace.	The program documents learners' enrollment in and attendance at other educational and training programs. The program conducts follow-up interviews with students attending postsecondary education and training programs. Schedules or follow-up reports show evidence of opportunities for students to learn about other programs.	___% of program completers with a stated goal of further training or education will be admitted to such programs. ___% of students who transition to other programs are contacted and interviewed on a yearly basis. ___% of students receive formal information about other educational and training programs each semester or term.
6. Assessment and Learner Gains		
I. The program uses a variety of appropriate assessments, including authentic, performance-based assessments; standardized tests; learner self-assessment; and assessment of nonlinguistic outcomes (e.g., perceived improvement in self-esteem, participation in teamwork activities).	Individual student folders or a database show evidence that placement, progress, and exit from the program is determined by a combination of any of the following types of assessment: • standardized tests • textbook progress/completion tests • pre- and posttests developed by the program to match learner's curriculum	___% of student records include documentation of at least two measures used for placement into the program. ___% of student folders or records include at least two types of assessment measures of progress (e.g., pre- and posttest scores and scored writing samples).

QUALITY INDICATOR	MEASURE(S)	PERFORMANCE STANDARD(S)
6. Assessment and Learner Gains (continued)	• weekly unit tests • writing samples • portfolio of student's work • performance-based tests • checklist of documented outcomes • checklist of completed competencies correlated to learner's needs • learner's log or journal • oral interview with learner	___% of students who exit the program have documentation that includes at least two types of assessment used to determine readiness to exit the program (e.g., standardized test score and portfolio of student's work).
O. Learners demonstrate skill-level improvements in listening, speaking, reading, and writing through a variety of assessments.	Learner records indicate evidence of improvement through at least two of the following three assessments: 1. Standardized test 2. Learner portfolio that contains learner verifications of completed tasks/skills. 3. Performance assessment criteria for successful skill attainment or completion of outcomes is defined.	1. Standardized tests An individual learner's scores on an appropriate standardized test show ___ level gain after ___ hours of instruction. (See A-2 for student performance levels and correlations with sample test scores.) 2. Learner portfolio Individual learner's portfolio includes a variety of completed tasks with evaluation criteria that demonstrate gain in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, or attainment of goals (e.g., dated writing samples or dated reading log). ___% of learners who complete ___ hours or more have a portfolio that demonstrates gain in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. 3. Performance assessment Individual learners will complete ___% of outcomes on a performance assessment checklist. Sample performance items for low literacy: • greet teacher • identify self • point to correct picture from aural cue • demonstrate comprehension of simple directions by acting out Sample performance items for higher levels of literacy: • write a note • role play a job interview • complete a job application • read a book to a child ___% of learners move to the next level by performing ___% of the tasks on a checklist of competencies identified as criteria for level exit.

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QUALITY INDICATOR	MEASURE(S)	PERFORMANCE STANDARD(S)
6. Assessment and Learner Gains (continued)		
P. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of their short- and long-term goals.	Individual learner records show progress toward and/or attainment of learner goals.	___% of learner instructional plans indicate progress toward the completion of steps leading to the attainment of identified goals. ___% of learners' records contain artifacts that reflect goal attainment. Examples of artifacts include copy of driver's license, copy of letter with employment offer, log of books read to a child, and GED certification.
7. Staffing		
A. The program recruits and hires qualified instructional staff with training in the theory and methodology of teaching ESOL. Qualifications may vary according to local agency requirements and type of instructional position (e.g., paid instructor, volunteer tutor). Examples of qualifications include a bachelor's or master's degree in TESOL, TESOL certificate from an accredited institution, adult education credential with authorization to teach ESOL, a certificate of completion from a provider's preservice TESOL training program, or a combination of adult-level ESOL teaching experience and training determined to be equivalent.	The program offers evidence that the instructional staff has training in the theory and methodology of teaching ESOL via documentation, such as transcripts from accredited institutions, letters of satisfactory completion of apprenticeships or internships with appropriately trained and experienced instructors, documents of satisfactory completion of training workshops, and portfolios evidencing knowledge of theory and methodology of TESOL. The program's recruitment materials and advertisements for instructional staff positions state that training in theory and methodology of teaching ESOL is required.	___% of instructional staff have documented evidence of a degree, certificate from an accredited institution, or credential (according to agency requirements) authorizing instruction in TESOL. ___% of instructional staff from the learners' community have documented evidence of knowledge of and experience in the theory and methodology of teaching ESOL. ___% of volunteer instructional staff have documented evidence of completion of training in the theory and methodology of teaching ESOL.

Student Performance Levels for ESL

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test and the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) are just two examples of standardized tests that provide scores correlated with student performance levels (SPLs). Each program needs to develop cut-off scores and hours of instruction appropriate for its learners.

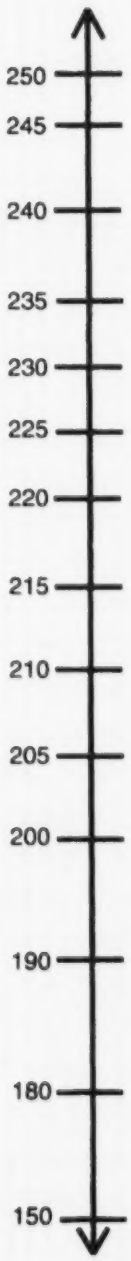
ESL Level	Student Performance Level[1] (SPL)	CASAS Scores	BEST Scores	Estimated Amount of Time to Complete Level[2]
Prebeginning	SPL 0–1	0–179	0–15	105–235 hours
Low Beginning	SPL 2	180–190	16–41	125–210 hours
High Beginning	SPL 3	191–200	16–41	125–210 hours
Low Intermediate	SPL 4	201–210	42–57	125–210 hours
High Intermediate	SPL 5	211–220	42–57	120–225 hours
Advanced	SPL 6	221–235	58+	120–225 hours
Adult Secondary	SPL 7	235–245	58+	120 hours
Proficient	SPL 8	245+	58+	120 hours

Notes

1 These SPLs are those identified in 1985. The new national chart will be available sometime in 2000.

2 The range of estimated hours to complete each level stems from the variety of factors that affect language acquisition (e.g., age, number of years of previous education, literacy skills in native language). These ranges were proposed by the Mainstream English Language Training Project (Grognet, 1997).

CASAS Skill Level Descriptors for ESL



DESCRIPTORS

Proficient Skills

SPL 8 Listening/Speaking: Can participate effectively in social and familiar work situations; can understand and participate in practical and social conversations and in technical discussions in own field. Reading/Writing: Can handle most reading and writing tasks related to life roles; can read and interpret most non-simplified materials; can interpret routine charts, graphs, and labels; fill out medical information forms and job applications. Employability: Can meet work demands with confidence, interact with the public, and follow written instructions in work manuals.

Adult Secondary

SPL 7 Listening/Speaking: Can function independently in survival and social and work situations; can clarify general meaning and communicate on the telephone on familiar topics. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret non-simplified materials on everyday subjects; can interpret routine charts, graphs, and labels; fill out medical information forms and job applications; and write an accident or incident report. Employability: Understands routine work-related conversations. Can handle work that involves following oral and simple written instructions and interact with the public. Can perform reading and writing tasks, such as most logs, reports, and forms, with reasonable accuracy to meet work needs.

Advanced ESL

SPL 6 Listening/Speaking: Can satisfy most survival needs and social demands. Has some ability to understand and communicate on the telephone on familiar topics. Can participate in conversations on a variety of topics. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret simplified and some non-simplified materials on familiar topics. Can interpret simple charts, graphs, and labels; interpret a payroll stub; and complete a simple order form; fill out medical information forms and job applications. Can write short personal notes and letters and make simple log entries. Employability: Can handle jobs and job training situations that involve following oral and simple written instructions and multi-step diagrams and limited public contact. Can read a simple employee handbook. Persons at the upper end of this score range are able to begin GED preparation.

High Intermediate ESL

SPL 5 Listening/Speaking: Can satisfy basic survival needs and limited social demands; can follow oral directions in familiar contexts. Has limited ability to understand on the telephone. Understands learned phrases easily and new phrases containing familiar vocabulary. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret simplified and some authentic material on familiar subjects. Can write messages or notes related to basic needs. Can fill out basic medical forms and job applications. Employability: Can handle jobs and/or training that involve following basic oral and written instructions and diagrams if they can be clarified orally.

Low Intermediate ESL

SPL 4 Listening/Speaking: Can satisfy basic survival needs and very routine social demands. Understands simple learned phrases easily and some new simple phrases containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with frequent repetition. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret simple material on familiar topics. Able to read and interpret simple directions, schedules, signs, maps, and menus. Can fill out forms requiring basic personal information and write short, simple notes and messages based on familiar situations. Employability: Can handle entry-level jobs that involve some simple oral written communication but in which tasks can also be demonstrated and/or clarified orally.

High Beginning ESL

SPL 3 Listening/Speaking: Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs; may have some simple oral communication abilities using basic learned phrases and sentences. Reading/Writing: Reads and writes letters and numbers and a limited number of basic sight words and simple phrases related to immediate needs. Can write basic personal information on simplified forms. Employability: Can handle routine entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks can be demonstrated.

Low Beginning ESL

SPL 2 Listening/Speaking: Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs; asks and responds to basic learned phrases spoken slowly and repeated often. Reading/Writing: Recognizes and writes letters and numbers and reads and understands common sight words. Can write own name and address. Employability: Can handle only routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks are easily demonstrated.

Beginning Literacy/Pre-Beginning ESL

SPL 0-1 Listening/Speaking: Functions minimally, if at all, in English. Communicates only through gestures and a few isolated words. Reading/Writing: May not be literate in any language. Employability: Can handle very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks are easily demonstrated. Employment choices would be extremely limited.

This chart provides general skill descriptors by level. Level descriptors for reading, math, and listening correspond to scaled scores on tests in those specific skill areas. (Reprinted from Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment, 2000, p. 48. Used with permission.)

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